

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

INFORMANT: TERESA M. LIVINGSTON

INTERVIEWER: STUART BURNS

DATE: MAY 16, 1988

S = STUART

T = TERESA

SG-NA-T029

Tape begins with introduction from interviewer:

This is Stuart Burns and I'm interviewing Teresa Livingston at her home at 28 Sperry Avenue in North Adams. And it's May 16th, 1988. And this is for Shifting Gears, The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts.

S: Okay. Here we are. I guess I'd like to ask you first about your grandparents. Sort of start with you grandparents and where they came from and when they moved to this area, if they did, or where they, where they lived and where they grew up.

T: Yeah. Yeah. My grandparents were born and raised in Italy, Province of Povia. [S: Uh huh] And that's where my parents came from. So that I never (--)

S: Both your, both, both sets of grandparents?

T: Yeah. And I, I never uh, I never knew my grandparents. No, never. No. And as a matter of fact my father uh, went, he came to America before my mother. And then he went back to Italy. And uh, they were married. And they never went back after that. No, they were always here in North Adams. Yeah.

S: Let me just check. I don't see this light turning on. So let me just check to make sure.

T: Okay.

[Tape shuts off momentarily and turned on again]

S: So [T: So] both your parents grew up in North Adams?

T: In the same uh, uh well. I don't know what my mother's age was when they were married over in Italy, but as far as I know of this was the only place they lived in. Yeah, the town. Yeah. Yeah, so we uh, you know, after my sister and I were born, well we stayed right here in the same town. Well we've been very happy, you know.

S: What kind of work did your parents do? Or did your(--)

T: Well my mother was a seamstress. [S: Oh!] And um, so for a short while she thought she would like to work in one of the mills, because we had a lot of cotton mills. [S: Right] And almost everybody worked either in the cotton mills, or in shoe shops. And uh, so she opted for the mill. But uh, she found out she didn't like it. [S: Oh] So Mom stayed home as a seamstress. And she, she used to do a lot of sewing. A lot of sewing. She was good. Yeah. And my father, uh, I don't know if you're aware. You know as you head down towards Adams on the main highway here, you know, going and you wind up um, uh, practically into Adams. Um, well there, on State Street there was this uh, big red building and it's still there. It's down near [Knowle?] Field. And it was a cracker shop. And that was where my father first worked, was in the cracker shop. And that was where my father first worked was in the cracker shop. And as I said, my mother thought she'd like to go into a cotton mill, but she found out it wasn't [S: Umhm] what it was suppose to be. So she had her little seamstress business right in her house.

S: Oh!

T: Yeah, umhm. Yeah.

S: So both of your parents worked pretty much full time?

T: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And yet uh, well we always found a way to keep a house up and plant a garden, and all this and that. And uh, I can truthfully say my sister and I had a happy childhood. We did, yeah, yeah. And then of course as the parents got older, well then it went in to health problems both of them. Yeah. My mother was very young when she died. Uh, as a matter of fact I, usually I make a little trip down the cemetery. So I said, I better put these down in black and white. So now my mother was born 1889 and she passed away 1940. And then my father's dates are just below that. Yeah, yeah. Umhm. Yeah. The were good people. Uh huh. Yeah. We had a lot of fun, a lot of fun. I was my father's pet. I was always tailing after him. And uh, my mother was a little more high strung, and especially when she started health, had, she started with her health problems. Um, she needed more attention. And my sister being the older uh, she kind of took care of Ma and when uh, when my father needed help, I used to go along with him on the bread truck, yeah. And uh as I mentioned be (--)

S: Oh, as a little, as a little, little girl?

T: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I was always my father's shadow. I looked just like my father. My sister is the spitting image of our mother. [S: Really?] Yeah. Yeah, my complexion is darker than Emma's. Emma's complexion is very fair. It's a lot, she's a lot lighter than I am. Yeah. Yup. But we, we did have a very happy childhood. Oh yeah. Yup.

S: What, what year were you born?

T: I was born 1918. Yeah, 1918.

S: In North Adams.

T: In North Adams. Yeah.

S: At the North Adams Hospital?

T: No. I must have been born at home. [S: Oh!] Because at the time very few of them went up to the hospital. They used to have a lot of midwives around. [S: Oh!] And uh, nine times out of ten, unless if the woman in labor was having uh, too much of a problem then she went into the hospital. The hospital was real small at the time here, yeah. Yeah. But uh, no.

S: And Emma, how many years older is Emma?

T: Uh, Emma was born, well she must have been born uh, I know she was born on Columbus Day. Uh, isn't that awful. I just don't know how many years there is between us.

S: Is it like a couple, couple of years? [T: No, no.] Oh, more than that?

T: More than that. I think (--) Okay, so I turned seventy in March. And Emma must be up in the high seventies, or she probably hit eighty. I'm not sure.

S: Oh, so she's quite a few older.

T: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

S: So she's (--)

T: But I could be wrong too. I could be wrong. But I know she, she was born on Columbus Day. Because I always told her, I said well being of an Italian family I don't know how come you weren't Krystal Columbina, or something like that. [Laughs] Because Columbina is an old Italian name for Columbia, you know? Yeah. Yeah. One of my neighbors her name is Columbia. [S: Oh!] Yeah, and she's still a young lady really. Yeah. Yeah. They, they were great for uh, trying to keep the Italian name. [S: Yeah] Yeah, yeah. Like uh, my father, he was always known as Joseph. Actually his name was Ernest. In Italian they pronounced it Ersnest. So all the old Italian people always called him Ersnest, for Ernest, or they just politely call him Baker, because that's what he was, was a Baker. [S: Hm] Yeah. Yup. And uh, my sister Emma, I don't know if she was named after one of my sister's, my mother's sisters or, or what. That I couldn't tell you. Miss Emma would be able to tell you probably. Yeah. Yeah. Yup. But we did uh, we had a good childhood. Yeah, very happy. Yup, umhm.

S: Did you live up on the hill above Heritage Park?

T: Uh, uh, uh, eventually we did. But I was raised actually, we lived on State Street for a good many years. [S: Oh] And it was uh, then when my father got into his own business, he was an Italian Baker. And uh, when he got into his own business meanwhile we had moved [S: Oh] up on another hill. We were up on Vernon Street Hill, at the time it was Witt Street. [S: Oh] It wasn't um, how can I word it? Uh, it wasn't an accepted street. It had a lot of bolders. Oh my God! The road, the road was very narrow and then eventually everybody was buying their cars. And every time they came up on that hill they had to be very careful, because if they were not aware of the conditions (--) Because they had great big bolders sticking out and you never new when one bumper, or one whosis there on the right. What do I want to say? You know, a fender, that's it. You never never knew if you were going to hit a fender or what. [Laughs] But in due time the city took the street over see, because it uh, it was just a private street at the time.

S: It must have been especially hard in the winter time it would seem with the snow and ice.

T: Oh! Oh it was something. It was something Stuart. Um, but it, it was a great place for raising children and I'm glad that our two girls were raised in about the same area. [S: Oh] It was close enough to the old (--) Yeah. Oh well. And then uh, we um, remodeled the whole house. And um, we made three apartments, whereas uh, it had only been built for two. But there was room for the three apartments. And uh, this is where I was brought up, was in that area. And um, we only moved once Bob and I. We left uh, a place that our family had bought quite some time ago, and then we sold it. And Bob and I after we were married had lived in that home, and we had it all renovated. And oh it was great. There, that was another good area. They had a lot of children around. And uh, the kids were happy there. Yup, yup. And uh, that was about it. We, we were not movers. [S: Umhm] No. [S: unclear] No, I, I can truthfully say I've only moved twice. And uh, this was the second place that we moved to. [S: Oh] And that was because of his health. Because he, it became to hard for him to make stairs. [S: Oh] And uh, he had come down with uh, several illnesses. One after the other. And uh, so this is why we had signed up for an apartment here. And in due time this is how we got this apartment, because of his handicap. Because meanwhile he had had uh, he went through lung cancer, came out of it like a trooper. That doctor down in Pittsfield where we, uh! He couldn't wait to see Bob every day. We went down five days a week. Every day. And uh, then if he was up to it we would stop and have lunch and then come home. And then he would take his nap. And then one illness went into the other. And uh, I don't know how or why, but uh, his last illness was diagnosed as bone cancer. And Dr. Rosenfeld had told me, he says unfortunately there's no cure. So we knew what to accept. We knew what was coming next. And like even before that he had uh, uh, a circulatory problem. So this is when he had to have a partial leg cut off. Well by the time everybody got organized and set a date, a true date for the surgery, well when Bob woke up he was minus this much. They, they had to take off for his own good. And he accepted it. And uh, he uh, even tried the artificial leg. And Bob wasn't Irish for nothing. They're good and stubborn. And uh, he was determined he was going to walk. And he was doing quite well. Then when he started with more little problems, one problem kept leading into a bigger problem. So that when he was diagnosed as having bone cancer we, we knew that was it. And um, he tried to fight it. We got all these prescrip...oh prescriptions I'm telling you Stuart, I never saw a man take so much. Yup. And he never complained. No. So anyway, we made it.

S: When did you get married?

T: We, I got married June in 1947. Yeah, yeah. So we, we went through our forty years anyway. Yeah, yeah. Ups and downs. [Laughs]

S: Of course. [Unclear]

T: Fights and making up just like anybody else. I'll be the first to say it. [S: That's for sure] These people who say we never fight, I don't believe them. I'm sorry, I don't believe them.

S: Yeah. You know sometimes it's good to fight a little bit.

T: Well this is it. Not all the time. [S: Not all the time] No. No.

S: Once in awhile. [T: Yeah, yeah. So] Otherwise you're not really communicating.

T: [Laughs] Yeah, that's true. Yeah, and then we, we have the two daughters. And they were always good to us. Yeah. I've got two good girls. I mean they were very uh, protective of uh, their mother and father. Oh yeah, yeah. But even they had their faults just like anybody else. They, they got into mix ups too, you know? And I'll be the first to admit it. And uh, because like especially like when they go off to college. And uh, this, I mean to me they were still children, let's put it that way. And uh, um, so Betty (--) No, the oldest one graduated from Saint Joe's College down in um, Hartford, or West Hartford. And um, Mary Elizabeth decided she was going to be a para-legal. So she went through with that course and got excellent marks. And, but now she's working for Properties of America down in Williamstown, but just as a clerk as far as I know. But they do respect her because she's quite a worker [unclear], yeah, yeah. Yeah. So everything has paid off for itself, yeah.

S: It's nice to have (--) Is your other daughter close by too?

T: No, she's in Detroit. [S: Detroit] Yeah. Yeah. As a matter of fact she just gave up a good job. It wasn't what she thought it was going to be. And she had quit her previous job. So um, right now she's on unemployment, but she's looking. She's as smart as a whip. She's too smart for her own good. This is it. Yup.

S: So you went to the high school at Drury?

T: Oh yeah!. Yeah!

S: Drury High School.

T: Happiest days of my life at Drury.

S: Oh [unclear].

T: Oh yes. Yeah. We, we played out little pranks and then uh (--) And this was the uh, the old

Drury High School. It's the Middle School now. [S: Right. Right] And Stuart [laughs]. And of course the girls had to go to gym classes. And uh, so be it. But the young men, in order for them to get to their training school they had to go through the gym. And those young fellows used to like to wait until the last minute, because they couldn't wait to see the girls in their little bloomer outfits and sneakers, and tip toeing around. [Laughs] Yeah. No, I've got a lot of laughs. Yeah, a lot of laughs. I did, I had a very happy childhood. I was too big, too heavy for my own, for my own good tell you the truth. So I, I would be always the last one picked to play basketball, you know? [Laughs]

S: It sounds like me.

T: Oh dear God. I used to be so embarrassed. And those darn bloomers down to here. And uh dear Stuart, I don't know.

S: But most of, mostly you really [T: happy] liked your time there [T: yeah, yeah] at Drury. Yeah.

T: Yeah, yeah. And uh, my husband and I went on our trips and like that. And the most beautiful trip was when we went to Hawaii. [S: Oh!] And we went as conventionaires. [S: Oh!] Oh Stuart I'm telling you they treated us like Kings and Queens. And of course Hawaii then wasn't what it is today. Because you could just start feeling the place growing up. It grew up too fast. See this is it. Now the, they're having just as much problems as anybody else in the states now, you know? But at that time it was beautiful. Oh, and they, they were so proud because they were trying to talk to us in our own english language, you know? "Me speak english." "Me speak english." Oh they were cute. [Laughs] Yeah.

S: What convention was it that you [few words unclear?]

T: Well this was uh, it was the office union from Sprague Electric. [D: Oh!] And um, and you could, you could have gone for one week, or two weeks. Well unfortunately Bob had put in for his um, his vacation time. And uh, of course this was before we even knew that our union was planning a trip to Hawaii. So this is why we were only able to stay the one week, because (--) And we, oh we wanted to stay the two weeks, but we couldn't because he had to go back to work. And see, when, when I worked I went back on the um, the second shift, five to eleven. And um, but the children were getting older. This is why I went back to work. [S: Umhm] Because as they got older your expenses were higher too.

S: That's right.

T: You know? [S: That's right] And uh, and I did bless the fact that they went to a catholic high school. And at least I put up with the uniforms. I didn't have to buy something new every month, or like that. You know, because they had to wear their uniforms. Yeah, Saint Joe's. Yup. And Saint Joe's is now where uh, the court is.

S: That's right. That's where (--) [T: Yup, yup] Emma said that, that her niece I guess [unclear] [T: Spanish class] Spanish classes in her very apartment.

T: Yup, in her apartment. See Emma's got a big handicapped apartment. Yeah, yeah. And uh, um, and that, that was Betty's home room. Yup. Yup. And more than one um, uh, person who graduated from Saint Joe's, their parents had moved in. And this um, when this girl went into her parent's apartment she says, "my God Ma, this used to be my old home room."

S: That's amazing.

T: And where my sister's apartment is, that was my younger girl's Spanish classroom. [Laughs] Yeah, you know?

S: It's amazing.

T: Because everything was left just the way it was. Well I think they probably made some of the apartments bigger like that Stuart, but uh, technically in that floor, they got a young fellow over there. I've never seen a young fellow work as hard as him to keep the place up. The floors are always immaculate in the hallway. And they've got all of the old original wood in most of the place. And then they have all of this inlaid stuff there. And uh, it really is uh, a nice place. Yeah. Although I wouldn't be comfortable over there. Emma MARY is, my sister, so fine. Me, I like my privacy here. [S: Oh yes] And all my good neighbors, we go out and we can't wait for this weather to get a little bit brighter to bring out our picnic table.

S: All right!

T: Uh, you, if you're still here in the summer time you'll have to come down and hear one of our concerts. Oh this, [S: unclear] oh this grand fellow, he has a portable keyboard. So see our picnic table is not out yet. So once that table gets out, the keyboard is going to come out. [S: Oh great!] Bob plays, then I play, and we sing. Oh Stuart it's great. [S: Wonderful] I love it here in the summertime. [S: Comment unclear] The wintertime I stick my toe, my tongue out, but the summer time. Oh last summer! Right. It was really something. I would leave the uh, Bob's windows open so he could hear us, because see he couldn't get out there. No, no. And um, but uh, he used to chuckle. He used to chuckle. And I'd come scooting in and say, "hey Livingston, what's your favorite Irish song?" So I'd run out. "Okay, you've got to sing Bob's favorite Irish song now." You know, When Irish Eyes Are Smiling, and all that. [Laughs] And he used to come out with that Irish brogue. I'd go into hysterics. [S: Oh!] Oh dear Stuart.

S: But he was quite, quite a singer too.

T: He used to love to sing. Yeah. Mostly all Irish songs. Yup. His mother definitely was a true Irish. [S: Oh!] And he would try talking to me in Gaelic. And I'd say, "Livingston, it's going in one ear and out the other." Oh but when we went, when we went to Ireland Stuart, oh dear, it was gorgeous. [S: Oh!] Beautiful. I never saw so many handsome fellows and so many pretty Irish girls in all of my life.

S: Really.

T: And come twelve o'clock everybody would be hanging on the corners. And that was the day Bob wanted to change some of the american money into the, the Irish, whatever they have. [Laughing] And I was left on the street corner. And then after twenty minutes I started to stew. I said, "where the heck does Livingston go?" He was suppose to go to a bank, you know? Well he had to go to three different banks before he could get our money changed. [S: Oh!] Can you imagine? [S: Oh!] Yeah. And there I was watching all of these handsome young Irish fellows and all of these beautiful Colleens. Oh they were pretty. And you, you could see no makeup. It was all their own color, you know? Pretty. Yeah. Oh we had a ball over there Stuart.

S: Oh that's great [unclear].

T: Oh, and we even uh, went uh, to this place where Bing Crosby always vacationed there. And it was an awful cute place. It wasn't that big. It was just a nice homey place. And, so this was the night before we were going to head back for home. And we didn't want to stay out too late. But we got in there, oh they had a lousy piano player. So one of the girls with us played the piano. And the piano player sat back near us and he had a ball. Then we realized it became about eleven or a little after. We got up to leave. Don't leave! Don't leave! The poor guy was petrified. Don't leave! Well, by that time, between the so called ale and whatever else they gave us to drink, we said, we better get home or we won't find the same trail that we, that we took coming up here. [Laughing] Oh! Oh we had so much fun. And we went to all of these little way, way out places you know. Uh geeze. Yeah. The uh, and then to get back to the Hawaiiin trip, we ever went to the cemetery. Oh Stuart there wasn't one dry eye, not one. Right (--) Um, and you'd look down and you could see part of the [unclear]. The water was just as clear. It was really sad. And you didn't even hear a pin drop. You did not hear a pin drop, because everybody just, we [unclear] this place and uh, they realized what was underneath and all of that. So you couldn't help but shed a few tears. And then they had all of this beautiful marble work. And all of the fellows who were in the tomb, we intombed in the water, all their names were up on that plaque. And we went through the cemetery. Oh dear, that was sad. It really was. And um, and it was more the women. The fellows, most of them had uh, been through World War II. And so they uh, they kind of shut up. And uh, they just, Bob included, he just walked with his head down. He didn't even want to think of the graves, you know, what had happened. And um, but oh it was beautiful. That cemetery, of dear God. Yeah. Yeah. So.

S: Now was working [T: yeah] at Sprague's the first job that you had, or had you had other jobs before you worked at Sprague?

T: Uh, well as a, as a young girl uh, let's see, when I got out of high school my first job was for like babysitting. Then eventually I got into Sprague's. Yeah.

S: And that was after you graduated from (--)

T: From high school.

S: Was that right after you graduated from high school?

T: Right after. Not too long after I graduated from high school, because my mother wanted me

to go to college and I said no. I wasn't interested, because I said all of my friends are working in Sprague's. And that was you know, about five years after that I regretted not going. [S: Umhm] Because I was suppose to go to [Bay Path?]. And my sister at the time, uh, she was going through nursing training down in not Natick, it was somewhere out on the east coast down there. I can't remember the school. But unfortunately she went on a diet and she got all run down and everything. She passed out cold. She hit her head on the, that hard floor or whatever it was in the kitchen, and so she had to give it up. My mother became sick and so Emma gave up. She didn't want to go back afterwards. No, no. No. And me that was suppose to go to Bay Path, I said no, I don't want to leave my friends. So there you are. We thought more of our friends than we did education. Today it's all education, [S: that's right] you know? Yeah.

S: That's right. [T: Yup] So you would have started in the mid 1930's sometime?

T: Yeah, because see I graduated in 1935. I graduated from high school in '35. Yeah. Yeah.

S: And then you started right away at, [T: right away] at Sprague?

T: Yeah, Yeah. I went into Sprague's.

S: What was that like? What was Sprague like and what was working there like when you first got there?

T: Uh, it was an education in it's own way, because I wasn't used to having a lot of people around, you know, and stuff like that. Or uh, the ladies worked just as much as the men did. But um, no, I can truthfully say I enjoyed it. And I enjoyed it the most the short time that I had gone in Research and Development down here. It was fascinating work there Stuart. Oh it was fascinating! Yeah. Yeah.

S: What was it like? What did you do when you first starting working at Sprague?

T: At Sprague's?

S: What was your job like?

T: I went into paper rolling, so called paper rolling. Yup. They had these higher machines and like that. And uh, it was just what it is, paper rolling. And you had so many rolls of paper on the reels. And like you knew (--) See they, everything was laid out as to how many uh, oh dear, that we had our little clocks that we used to watch. So that, because all of these condensers were different naturally. Some was smaller and some were larger. So this was the thing that you had to watch. That you didn't go over your clock. And it was [awful?] on the job. Oh dear. And you have heard those ladies fighting about, "well she always gets the good work, I don't get..." And oh dear God. [Chuckles] They were like a bunch of cats. But I made a lot of good friends. So, yeah.

S: Were they, were they friends even though they were snarling?

T: Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.

S: I mean they still liked each other and (--)

T: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, more or less. Yeah, yeah. Very uh, just a couple of the high strung ones, well then they would stop speaking to somebody who had been their best friend, or like that. But that went along with the turf too, you know? Because um, like I always felt if I did something by the hour, we all would have been better off instead of arguing and fighting over how many are going to make this hour and all that stuff. I couldn't see that. I couldn't see that. No. And I don't like to hear arguing. [S: Yeah] And uh, so I, I tried to play it cool.

S: So you had a (--) Did you have a basic wage and then, and then on top of that you had a bonus.

T: Yeah. If you went over the rate, like each job had an hourly rate on it. And um, like if you put out, say if the base rate was two hundred, and you put out four hundred, you had made double that rate. Yeah. Yeah. This is how (--) And that's what they used to call bonus. [S: Oh, I see] Yeah. Yeah. And me, I was happier if I opted for something that I could enjoy, instead of arguing over um, the work. So I was very happy. I used to do a lot of the samples. I loved it. I loved it.

S: What did that, what did that [unclear]?

T: Uh, the samples (--) Uh, they uh, (--) Well see they, they had the, the so called spec writers. And they would get all the um, dimensions of the uh, the actual product. Now see these things they'd go anywhere from that long to yeah long. [S: Umhm] And so it all depended on what you were handling.

S: The actual condensers, [few words unclear].

T: The actual condensers, yeah. And they became condensers after we rolled. See we had these machines and um you know, naturally we had the mandril and everything. And uh, we started out with a foot, a foot thing. And then they graduated to something else that was a little more modern. And uh, you, you would just have to set your machine and nine times out of ten it would stop where it was suppose to for that count, for that count, yeah. And uh, some of them they had maybe uh, oh about anywhere from four to six rolls of the (--) There was a name for that paper now and I can't think of it. Because with that paper you always had to have aluminum foil also. And um, this was how it worked out. The foil would be within the paper. And then you'd only have to put on a tab afterwards. You would moisten that tab in water and that would hold the condensor together.

S: Oh I see. [T: Yeah, yeah] So it was the, the rolled paper that was around the condensor.

T: Right. Right. Right. And see, and the foil was also the connector too. Yeah. Yup. And uh, oh yeah we had a lot of battles over there.

S: But what, why would there be battles? What would they be arguing about?

T: Well because of the rates. Each job had a different rate. And so that if the rate that you had to make was higher, then maybe the one next to you, well she always gets the good job. Oh, it was just like kids in kindergarten. [S: Oh] Just like kids in kindergarten.

S: [Comment unclear]

T: Well we always had supervisors. We, we had our paper to go by, you know, as to how many turns to take, how big the condensor would be. Yeah. Yeah. But um, then when I went into um, Research and Development it came a different story. Oh God that work was fascinating Stuart. Yup.

S: So that was quite a bit later?

T: Yes. [S: how long?] That was after I was married. And I didn't go back to work until the children were pretty well grown. And that's when I went back to work.

S: Did you work, did you work during World War II?

T: Yeah. Umhm.

S: What was that like during World War II?

T: World War II? Well we had so many women that did a lot of sqaabbling, but I mean I didn't mind it. No I didn't mind it. And because we all had something in common. Even a husband was in service, or the boy friend was in service. So this is why actually everybody got along good, because we were all in the same boat. And um, I'll never forget when I was back to work then, when World War II started. And to see these young fellows, oh, jump up from their chairs. That was it, they all went down and signed up. [S: Hm] And a lot of them didn't come back. Yup. And they were just kids. I mean you know, we were all that much younger. And I think you had to be sixteen was it to get a job in the so called factory at the time, you know, a steady job. And um, so that we were almost all about the same age. [S: Umhm] And so they may have been in their early twenties, because see, now I graduated from high school in 1935. And uh, so now war broke up in about '41, didn't it? And uh, so there you are. So you could see that none of us were that old. [S: That's right] And um, then once war broke out, that's when a lot of them wanted to go serve their country. Yeah. A lot of them didn't come back Stuart. Yeah.

S: So it was mostly women at Sprague during the war years?

T: After that it was mostly women, because uh, all the younger men uh, were in service. [S: Right] And it was the older men uh, that they had to rely on, you know, in the company. Yeah. Oh yeah.

S: So even women took on supervisor jobs [T: oh yeah] and others during the World War?

T: Yup. Umhm. Yup. Yup. They did, yup, women became supervisors. At the time you had all, all the men, mostly men. Maybe once you might have one woman who was in charge of a certain section, but no, that's when all the happened. [S: Yeah] Yeah, you know, when the women took over. Because the men (--) Oh I can still see those kids running out to go down to sign up. We cried over a lot of them Stuart. Yup. [S: I'm sure] A lot of them didn't come back. And uh (--)

S: Did your, was your husband your boy friend then? [T: No] Or did you, or did you, or you met him after?

T: No. I didn't meet him until after the war.

S: Till after the war.

T: Yeah, after the war. Yeah. Yup. By that, by that time he, well (--) And uh, the thing that I always felt bad about, see Bob could have gone higher in the service and uh, but I forgot what the problem was. Something stopped (--) Oh hey, I forgot that was running. Oh dear! Well Bob couldn't get the area that he wanted, otherwise he would have stayed in service, because he had been in with Company K. And um, so anyway when he came out he wanted this certain job. This was the thing that he was interested in. But it seemed as if the uh, so called recruiter whatever, wouldn't give it to him. So that's when Bob told him to shove it, and that was that. But no, he had a lot of years in. Yeah, yeah. But uh, being a proud stubborn Irish, he couldn't get what he wanted. So that's when he went back to the Print Works. Yeah.

S: Oh. Oh so he worked at Arnold Print Works in North Adams?

T: Arnold Print Works, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

S: So he never worked at Sprague? [T: No, no.] He worked, he worked at Arnold's, Arnold's Print Work.

T: Yeah, Arnold Print. He was always a color man. [S: Oh] Yeah, and he used to have to check. You know, have the uh, they had to have different portions, or different colors to get the true colors that they wanted. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, um. There again he never got the promotions that he should have gotten, but he accepted it. So I just kept my mouth shut. I said, well hey. You know, as long as the man is happy enough why bother uh, you know, using your mouth all the time. Yeah.

S: Was it different working at Sprague during World War II from earlier, because, because you were in this war effort [T: right] and you were, you know, all this high moral.

T: Earlier, uh, earlier Stuart we were nothing but one big happy family. Everybody knew everyone else. No, there wasn't any jealousy about well, you know, so and so is making more money than so and so. That could have been uh, the least of our problems. We were just happy working. And we would have our Halloween dances and um, different affairs. And then of course as Sprague was getting bigger, the parties were getting to be a little bit too much on the

rowdy side. Yes! I'll never forget the time, well we had the little old Saint Anthony Church. And uh, Bob and I were married in the old Saint Anthony Church come to think of it, before they built the new church. Yeah. And uh, so to make a long story short uh, it was holiday time and so everybody was having their parties and like that. And that was all right. And then they all decided they were going to meet down at one of the larger clubs, like say, well you know, like um, the um, gee. [Chuckles]

S: Armory, or (--)

T: Like the Armory. All of the Sprague parties down the Armory were unreal. They were unreal. You wouldn't believe it Stuart. Oh dear! But there again we still had fun. But then at Christmas time they were doing just a little bit too much drinking. Yeah. And uh, so they uh, they had asked us not to be as uh, what's the word I want to say Stuart? You know?

S: Boisterous?

T: Boisterous. That's it. Sure. I'll never forget the time that this one fellow, this was before they built this uh, uh, the new uh Saint Anthony's Church. And right next to the old Saint Anthony Church, which was on Holden Street, they had the uh, an old Veteran's place. They had a great big cannon out there and all this and that. And um, so this man (--) And this is where sometimes they used to continue a Christmas party there. And um, this um, young fellow who'd been at the party got drunk. Well evidently he went out, then he kind of lost his way, because he wound up in the church in the confessional. [S: Oh!] [Both laugh]

S: Oh, that's not where you want to end up.

T: Oh what a lecture we got! Oh dear, in church about these Sprague Christmas parties and what was happening. And all this and that. Oh dear God, that priest, oh! He was so mad. [S: It sounds it.] Well because one of the drunks, I don't know where he thought he was going, but he thought he headed for the stairs and then to the place there where everybody else was. Instead he took the little walk to the old Saint Anthony's Church and he walked into the confessional. That's what did happen. Oh that poor priest. Oh!

S: Was the priest there when he walked in?

T: He walked in, right.

S: The priest was there?

T: The priest was there. And the minute he knew that somebody else went into the, I can't call it a booth, but into the confessional, that's when he opened up like his little door, because there was a screen and he could always hear if somebody came in you know, like that. And this is what happened. And then the others were going into the church not even knowing where they were. Oh yeah, we got a nice big lecture that week. Yup! Yup.

S: So this man started confessing when he was in this, he was in the confession, confessional?

T: He didn't even realize he was in the confessional until the priest told him. He didn't know where he was. [Laughing] He sort of, he should have headed for home. Instead he was going in the Grand Army Hall, but he made the wrong turn. See, he turned into the old, where the old um, Saint Anthony's Church was. And the priest was hearing confession. It was like um, a Friday or so. [S: Oh] And they were getting ready for the holiday, see, because they uh, and they would have extra priest around, or they would have more hours, longer hours if anyone wanted to go to confession. And this is what happened to this other poor soul. He had no idea of going to confession. No, but that's where he thought everybody was, in that building. Instead everybody was in the old Grand Army Hall. And he walked into the confessional in the Old Saint Anthony Church. Yup. Oh what a lecture. [S: Oh boy] Oh dear God.

S: Well what, what changed (--)

side one ends.

side two begins.

Begins with Teresa (informant) in mid sentence:

T: Yeah, because naturally they expected the help to work a little bit harder. [S: Oh, during the war] Or put out a little more during the war for the war effort, you know, because they were depending on a lot of these condensers and like that. Yeah. Yeah, that was the reason there.

S: So that the supervisors were a little harder on the workers.

T: Yeah. Yeah. Right. Yup, yup. And you had to be uh, a little more careful too, because you knew that that was going into the war industry, see? [S: Um] And uh, that's when they uh, they went into a lot of new capacitor projects. Oh yeah. And then gradually they started to expand. [S: Umhm] Yeah. Yeah. But (--)

S: So you, were you not able to have quite as much of a social life at work, [T: that's it] or (--)

T: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And like during the war years, well you know, we all felt that we had our duty and so that's what we used to, we worked a little bit harder. Yup. But yet when they had those Christmas parties they didn't pull back on anything. Yup.

S: Even during the war. [T: Yup] Yup.

T: Yup, because they felt that everybody needed a break, you know, in between. Yeah, they uh, a lot of the fellows that we knew never came home Stuart. No. No.

S: Now were you involved in the union during that time?

T: At the time I was, yeah, at the time.

S: Now is that the condensor workers?

T: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. It always went as Sprague Electric, but uh, that included you know, anyone who worked at Sprague Electric. And they had all of these different projects. I used to love the sample department. I liked it very much there. Yup. Yup. Then when I went back I was back in paper roll. And I went back of the second shift. And um, then they had an opening down at the Research Center. And the girls were getting a little bit bigger and I had to (--)

S: Now is this the Research Center, the new, the new Research Center building? So this would have been like the early 60's?

T: Right. Yeah. Yeah it must have been. It must have been. I really don't remember just when they opened it.

S: But up until then you were still working in the paper rolling?

T: Yup, the paper rolling and then I was in the sample department. And that was up at Beaver Street. And uh, then I became the clerk for the room, you know, regarding the orders that were going out and like that.

S: What did you do as the clerk?

T: Well we had to uh, to make sure that all of these counts were right and so on and so forth, uh, Stuart. Yeah. And then um, well they, they had the cards, the work cards to be checked. And you time cards, you know, that all went along with it. Yeah. Yeah. And then uh, I didn't work for awhile after I had the children. But when I went back it was on nights. And that's after awhile, of course the children were getting bigger, so I was able to go on days. And then uh, I decided I would like to make the move. And I knew that the place was open, the Research Center was open. And so because of the background that I had with condensers and like that, uh, they uh, I was able to start right then and there. Yeah, and I enjoyed it down there. Yeah.

S: What did you do there?

T: Research and Development. We did anything and everything. We um, they used to produce the wafers. And we would have to coat the wafers with uh, a product. And um, then they would have to be like baked for so many minutes, or uh, there was always, you always had a schedule to follow anyway. Yeah. And it was very interesting. We worked on all the different new products that were coming in this way. Anne, the girl that you met down here, she was a whiz at it. [S: Oh] Yeah, yeah. She was a whiz. Yeah, she was my favorite person down there. Yup. And uh, the place was expanding, and expanding. And in my opinion I think they expanded too much. And um, because everything was so technical. You couldn't even open your mouth about all of these things, because it was all hush hush. Yeah. Yup. And uh, no, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed working down there. Yup. Then of course they got another plant started. See they started to spread. And I think maybe they started to spread a little bit too fast, because they were used sending work back and forth, back and forth at that time. But I, I can truthfully say I enjoyed

what I did down there. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. And then, you know, people can feel these things coming on Stuart. Like they knew sooner or later they wouldn't be having these jobs. And oh there was a lot of back biting and all of that. And um, so that when they laid me off, having more seniority than somebody else, the union wanted to fight it. And I said, "no way." I'm not up to it. I said I know you're not very happy about it. I said I don't feel as if they want me anyways. So I said you know where they can go. And he says you don't have to tell me where they can go. I know it. [Laughs] So that, that did it. And meanwhile Anne had already left. I think if Anne was still there um, I think it would have been something different. But I'm like that. I said I felt as if I wasn't wanted. And um, so I says, I'm not about to fall all over these people for my job. I said I'll, I'll take the unemployment. And uh, so I never went back after that. No.

S: When was that?

T: Excuse me?

S: Do you remember? [T: What year?] Yeah, around what year?

T: Oh gee. My girls were still sm...they were kind of small.

S: [Comment unclear]

T: I can't. I really can't remember the year Stuart.

S: So it was probably in the sixties do you think? Or in the seventies?

T: I don't think it was the seventies.

S: Oh, it doesn't (--) So now, so you didn't go back to Sprague after. [T: No, no, no.] After that, yeah.

T: No, I didn't go back. I couldn't, because uh, I, I couldn't go back without a grudge. And I didn't want to go back with a grudge. [S: Right, right] I didn't. Yeah. So I just went my old married way. I think I survived all right Stuart. [Laughs]

S: I sure think you did. Were you involved in, in any of the strikes during World War II? I know there were, there was one, there was one strike at the beginning of the war and one strike at the end of the war.

T: Was I, was I ever. I was right there in that picket line taking all of these insults from the people who were going in. Oh yes. Yup. There was a lot of shoving going on, a lot of elbowing.

S: Was that the strike at the end of the war? After the war was over?

T: Yeah. Yeah. That was, one, about one of their last strikes. Yeah.

S: It's about a six or seven week strike.

T: Oh yeah, yup. Yup, we all went out.

S: Yeah.

T: But you didn't, you didn't get much support from the community, or people in the community?

S: Not that much, not that much. No. No. I never thought that we did Stuart. I may be wrong. But I, I never thought that. I think we could have gotten more support. I really think so. Yeah. But you really needed to go out. I mean you really needed higher, higher wages.

T: I, I felt it was my duty to follow the rest of them. I couldn't stay in there. No, no. And then you know, like the, the ones who were, were still in there, well they never got in with an insult regarding scab and this and that. And maybe a lot of these people had to go in there. But um, no, I never went in during the strike. Oh, I was out. We had quite a few strikes all together. Oh yes Stuart. Yeah. Yeah. And I know, you heard me say, I gave up schooling. And uh, many a time I'd walk from our end of the city up to Sprague's, which is way up at the other end. [S: that's right] And to the, one of the original buildings there. And uh, I never complained or anything. No.

S: That's a long, long walk.

T: That was a long track.

S: It must have taken you about at least a half an hour, maybe almost an hour?

T: Oh yeah, yeah.

S: Forty-five minutes?

T: Yeah, about forty-five. Yeah. If you, if you had a good stride you could make it in a half hour. But if you tried to sit down, you weren't relishing the fact that you had to stand up and go out somewhere either. [S: Right. Right] No, it was quite the track.

S: It must have been especially hard in the wintertime. It was icy.

T: Oh the winters were miserable. [S: Oh yeah] Yeah. Yeah. But um, I know, my uh, my (--) I can remember my father bringing us up a few times. And then of course when I was on the second shift, well these girls used to make sure that they had their car. And uh, we, we even made it up there all right in the wintertime. Yup. Yup. It was harder on the second shift when you came out, because yeah boy, you had to shovel before you even got into the car. [S: Hm] Yup, yup. Yeah.

S: Now your father gave you a ride in his bread, bread wagon?

T: Oh yeah, oh yeah! It was like in a form of a beach wagon. [S: Oh] Because we used to love to have family picnics and like that, you know? And so he had this, oh it was a great beach wagon. And uh, but of course he had his baskets and like that for the bread. [S: Right] You know? And um, so anyway we, we enjoyed that beach wagon very much. Yup. And then we got a second one too. Yup. Yup. And I, and uh, oh, one of my favorite people, my cousin had a very unfortunate accident. And he was peddling bread for my father. He worked for Pa. And um, down in this, are you aware of [Sattle Night?] down on Curran Highway when they get to [Sattle Night?]. After, after the restaurant. What's that restaurant Stuart? Uh?

S: Branning, Brannen's?

T: No, no, no. Um, it's on the highway. It's a popular restaurant. Going down towards Adams. What in the world is the name of it?

S: Not [unclear]?

T: No.

S: Further down?

T: Yeah, it's down further. Uh, isn't that awful. Now if I hadn't thought about it the name would have come to me right away, you know? I don't know. I'll just, I'll just drop the whole thing there. [Laughs] It's where, it's in around the same area. You know how Sprague rented out um, [S: yes] part of two different places down on the highway? [S: Right, right, right] Well this was that restaurant just before. It's Frank, Frank somebody or other owns it. Frank, ooh! His wife's name is Lilley.

S: So your cousin had an accident?

T: Oh yeah. Um, he was peddling bread and uh, [sattle night]. And um, see I wasn't with him, his son was. And um, there was one particular family there, they had oh, a large number of children. And it seems as if the um, the father worked, but it seems as if the mother let the kids roam as she wanted. [S: Um] And uh, so my cousin, and he had his son with him. And uh, they were coming back from a delivery and they were going to start another delivery right there, you know, in the same neighborhood. And all of a sudden they could hear somebody screaming. Well come to find out one little beautiful girl, she was the prettiest little girl, had gotten under that beach wagon. My cousin, not knowing that she was there. Now her mother knew the little girl was out there playing. So he went to start up and all of a sudden he became aware of all the screaming. Now he never knew she was under there. Never new. No. He cried like a baby. But uh, fortunately he wasn't held on any charges, because they knew there was a decided accident. That it wasn't done, you know, [S: right] because he didn't check or like that. No. It wasn't that. The fact was, the mother who was in the house should have been watching her little girl who had been playing out in the road. [S: Umhm] See even the mother didn't know the little girl was under there.

S: Did the little girl die?

T: Oh yeah. Yup, she died of the injuries. Yeah, because as I said, he didn't know she was there. No. And all of a sudden my cousin Del heard all of this hollering. Oh dear God! It took him a long time to get over it. And that's when they did suspend his license for a short while, and that's when I had to go out a peddle bread. Yeah. I loved it though.

S: You were, were you in high school then, or older?

T: Uh, I was a little older than high school, yeah.

S: So that was after you started working at Sprague's?

T: Yeah, [S: Yeah] yeah, yeah.

S: But you liked sort of all of the contact with people?

T: I love, I love people. Especially these, these old Italian people. There's about twenty different dialects. And I was only taking a change and knew what they were trying to tell me. [Laughs] I had to put on a big front sometimes. You know? And when, more than once I couldn't quite understand what they were trying to tell me, because there were so many versions of these Italian speaking people. It all depends on whatever province they come by, or if it's from the deep south, or if it's from the top north. [Laughs] And uh, so I, I used to have quite some time there. Yeah. Now I was leading into a story. I forgot now.

S: You were going to talk about your cousin. Then you told that story.

T: Uh, yeah. He uh, (--) Yeah, how bad he felt about this case, yeah. Yeah. But then I went into another story, didn't I?

S: That's the one, that's the one I remember.

T: [Laughs] Would you like to have him make you a glass of lemonade, or something.

S: No. I'm, I'm, (--) I think maybe just go a little bit further and then, [T: Oh yeah] and then we may need do another one, another interview later if that's [unclear]. I know I'll have more questions after, you know, after I listen to this tape, but (--)

T: Okay. Yeah, okay. Uh, now when I had looked at the um, [unclear], now see they, you wanted the uh, the deaths, the years of the uh, of my father and mother? [S: Yes] Yeah. Yeah, I made that little notations.

S: So I can just take this with me?

T: Umhm, umhm. There's nothing much on it, just the dates there. Yeah. Because I didn't know

how far you were going today into the interview, you know? [S: Right] And Stuart I wish I could find that picture, because as I said, I know that you'll be interviewing my sister. And because I really want to I can't find it. My, it was my mother and my father and my sister was a little tyke. I think she's standing on a chair and the two proud parents are one on each side, you know? And oh it was, it was an adorable picture. [S: Um] Yeah. I'm going to look through those two draws again, yup. Yup, because I, usually I put all of my pictures you know, in the same unit, but one may be in one draw and another unit in another thing. And I really would like to find it, because it's cute. And they were so proud you know, standing there. [S: Oh yeah] Yeah, so proud. Yeah.

S: I want to ask you about, about um, what it was like after, after World War II ended? Did a lot of the women who went to work at Sprague or were already there during the war, did a lot of them leave after the war when the men came back?

T: Not that many.

S: Or, so most of them stayed on?

T: Most of them stayed on [S: and you stayed?] because, yeah because (--) And then by, by that time you knew that they were going to give up bonuses and things like that. So that that's why they stayed on Stuart. Yeah. Yeah.

S: Because a lot of women in industries all over the country who went to work during World War II left after the war. Went back to raise families and things.

T: Yeah, right. Yeah they did. No, most of them here, providing that they didn't get layed off or like that, no, they stayed right on the job. This way they were building up their seniority. [S: right] And uh, they were lucky enough so that when the pension deal came through, well they were part of it. Yeah. Yeah.

S: So you stayed on for quite a few years after, after the war?

T: No. No I didn't. I, I was still working in Sprague's. I was down in Research. Or was I already married when I went into Research? Oh dear!

S: You mean you went into Research before the new Research and Development plant was built?

T: No. No. I went in when it was, when they had just finished it. When they had finished working there.

S: And that was when you returned to Sprague's. [T: Umhm, umhm, um] So it was quite a few years [T: Right] that you weren't working before that.

T: Yup. Yeah. Oh yeah. I stayed at home with the children. And then there came a time when I decided to go back for the few hours for five to eleven, and um, because by that time Bob

would be home from work. [S: Umhm] And so that's when I went back. And um (--)

S: And your kids were real young.

T: And the kids were (--) Yeah. And then uh, you know, gradually the kids have a way of growing up. I'm telling you, we had more fun up there. Because I was the kind, I would rather see the younger people around me than worry about them going out. And oh Stuart, [S: comment unclear] I would take my kitchen apart. I had a beautiful Spinet piano. [S: Oh!] And uh, I still had some of these records. [S: Oh!] And I've got a lot of the old forty fives. I think my oldest daughter who happens to live in Detroit still has some of those little forty-five rolls like that. I used to clear out the kitchen and we'd put that thing on the electric stove and made the sure the electric stove was off. And I always had a nice big board there and we'd, the kids would dance in the kitchen.

S: Oh really?

T: Yup. And to this, to this thing. And then I also had a smaller one. They used to dance in the kitchen. Then it was picnic time.

S: This is when they were teenagers, or?

T: This is when they we in high school. [S: High school] They were in high school. I love them. I was Mom, Bob was Pa to so many kids. But we loved everyone.

S: Oh. So a lot of their friends came over too.

T: And uh, so that some of the parents would call and say well they would pick up so many of the children and stuff like that. And that was fine if they wanted to do it, you know? But the parents used to come in and they used to sit and sing too. And the piano would be going. Then of course if the piano was going then the music had to stop, because it was clashing. [S: Right] Because the piano was in the den and this thing was out in the kitchen. [Laughs] This is why I think of these. Well (--)

S: Well it sounds like your house was a, was a continuous party.

T: Oh, oh I'm telling you. And I was always very pleased when the parents used to come in. [S: Oh yeah] Because I just wanted them to know it was nothing but a little dance, and a little light lunch, and a clean party. Then when they turned twenty-one, okay, that was another thing. But I would not give them any liquor. No. No. No. I wouldn't give them the liquor. And we used to make a punch. [S: Oh!] And we used to tap it a little bit just so that they could say they had the fun of it, you know? And uh, and not that much. And um, no, we had fun up there. Oh God. I was Ma to so many kids that uh, and uh, a couple of the parents that I didn't know, they couldn't wait to meet us, because the kids were always talking about Ma and Pa up on Furnace Street. [Both laugh] Ah, but I loved them though. Yeah.

S: That's really wonderful to be able to keep your kids at home so that, so that they don't have to

go out and get in trouble going (--)

T: At home, this was the main thing. This was the main thing. And this is why they were glad that they knew where the kids were. [S: Right] And I would let them know just about what time they'd be leaving the house. So this way if they got home later it was their fault, not mine. Yup. Oh yeah it was a whole slew of them. Ah geese.

S: Oh that's, that's wonderful.

T: And I'll never, one of them particularly he used to come in and he would hug the refrigerator before he hugged me. [Both laugh] Oh, and uh, oh he was a smart fellow. Awfully smart fellow. But uh, then after they graduated uh, most of them kept in touch for quite awhile, because it was a big thrill for me to have them bring their little babies up so we could see them. [S: Oh yes, oh yes!] I says, oh, I can't believe it! I says when you kids were freshmen you were coming up. They graduated from college. And I said they're coming up with their babies now. You know? And you wonder where the time went. [S: Oh boy] Yeah. No, we had good times and well we had sad times too. But uh, no, when I look back on those days they were really carefree. Yeah. And as long as the parents were pleased where their children were going that's all that mattered to me. Yup. And I said, if when they leave this house they do something, I says, that's different. I'm not responsible for that. [S: Umhm, that's right.] Because if they're old enough to go out to parties, then they're old enough to know what responsibility is. Yup. But, and as I said they couldn't wait until they turned twenty-one, because at the time I think you had to be twenty-one in order to drink. So. Then they had their light punch and they were in their glory. They thought it was great. [Laughs] I don't think anyone of them realized it was mostly the soda with flavored punch. Yeah.

S: Now when you were, when you were working, [T: Yeah, umhm] during this time when you were working (--) Well first when you were working the five to eleven shift [T: Yup] and you were working at the Research Center, [T: right] did that, how did that affect your family time and [unclear]. Did that make things harder for you?

T: Uh, no, because um, let's see. When I worked from five to eleven, either Bob was home with them, or we would have a very good friend of our stay with the children. Yeah. And um, then uh, as they got older they became a little bit more reliable. [S: right] Yeah, yeah, yeah. But um, like for the younger daughter I had a very good neighbor who used to come in. Because meanwhile I had gone on to the day shift, see. And I would work all day instead of going in from five to eleven. And um, so I had a very good neighbor. And uh, she would come over, because Nester was already going in to some of the older grades. And she would come over because of the second daughter and make sure that she had her breakfast and stuff like that. It was only a matter of a couple of hours in the morning. And um, then Betty would come home for lunch. And uh, so everything worked out fine. Yeah, it worked out fine. Yup.

S: There's a lot of women, especially these days have a really hard time working [T: they do] and taking care of families at the same time. [T: They do] It sounds like you were able to do that pretty well at the time. [T: Yeah, yeah]

T: We, we just had um, certain things. Not that I appointed them to well you, you should do this and you should do that. No. But uh, somehow or another everything worked out fine. Yeah. But the women who would come in for the younger girl, uh, because see there is that much years difference in the two. And uh, but then when they reached the point when they were both going to Saint Joe's together, well then that made a big difference. Yeah. [S: Right] As long, as long as she just came over and made sure that the girls were up and going out at the right time. Because by that time I was working days. And um, so that I would have to be in earlier. So no, things, things really worked out good. [S: Oh that's great] Yup. Yup.

S: Were you still at Sprague when the strike happened in 1970? That big strike?

T: Uh, there were very few strikes I didn't go out on. [S: comment unclear] And uh, that was the last big one.

S: That was the IUE, last big one.

T: Yup, the IUE. I was there!

S: IUE and [unclear].

T: I was there using my elbows [laughs]. But this one girl that I'm very friendly with now, every once in while I say Lil, wasn't I rotten when I gave you a shove. You were in the picket line and I came over and gave you a big shove. [S: Oh!] Oh I was furious. No, because I was down at the Research then. Yeah. Oh I was furious!

S: So you were picketing right there at the Research, Research Center?

T: [Laughs] There and even up at Beaver Street. Because Beaver Street was still going. I did my share of walking. I didn't use, I didn't like to use my mouth too much tough, because I had too many friends. Even though they were still working I mean I could uh, (--0

S: Was it hard to have some of your friends cross the picket line, or?

T: Very hard. The hardest thing in the world Stuart. The hardest thing. Because I hated doing it, but I felt hey, somebody's got to do it. And uh (--)

S: Because you felt like you had a really just cause.

T: Yeah, because even this, this friend of mine. I'll say Lil, remember when I gave you that awful shove because you were in the line and I didn't want you picketing. [Laughs] Oh dear! [S: But, but she, you] And she wasn't picketing, she was going into work.

S: And you were on the picket line?

T: I was on the picket line.

S: So you gave her a shove, or she gave (--)

T: I gave her a shove. [Laughs] Oh, I gave her a shove. We can laugh about it now, but at the time I was furious.

S: Was she angry after you gave her a shove?

T: Very much so. Very much so. Yeah. Yeah.

S: Were you able to talk about it with her then?

T: Oh yeah. [Laughs] Yeah. Even now we're both in the Sons of Italy. And for awhile I was the uh, not the recording secretary, the financial secretary. And uh, every once in awhile I say Lil, remember the time I gave you that awful shove in the picket line? She said, "Jesus Christ, she says, I've never forgotten it." I said you don't have to swear about it. [Laughs] Oh dear!. I've had a lot of sad times, but I've had more of the laughing times. Really I have. Yeah.

S: But was that strike a really hard time that (--)

T: It was. [S: Yeah] It was. And it involved so many people. And see, I like people. And I had a lot of good friends that insisted on going it, which was their prerogative. But I, I always felt bad about that. Yeah, when I gave her her shove she sure knew I did. Yeah.

S: Do you think that strike in 1970 was a victory?

T: No really. These company's will do just what they want anyway. I think they uh, they did agree to more of a raise then. [S: Yes] And that was the only good outcome of it. But the thing is, the ones who were going into work, and the ones who were picketing, well we're the ones that took the fall really, you know? Because we lost out on that money. [S: Umhm] And uh, no, but gradually we all went back to work. And uh, things were kind of smoothed over. But even not too long ago I said Lil, remember the time I [Laughs]? Geese, I thought she was going to fall flat on her face. I'm glad she didn't. Yeah. Yeah, she said you gave me an awful shove. I said, well I was just made like everybody else. But see the things was, the thing that I begrudge, she was married and she had a husband uh, to support her. So if she was that happy working at Sprague's, well she wanted to go in that was her prerogative, but we didn't think it was right. [S: Umhm] Because they didn't have any children. They owned their own house. Well hey, we owned houses too and we still had to put to one side for taxes or, and uh, for repairs. But she couldn't quite see it. So anyway we just dropped it. Now we laugh about it and let it go. Yup.

S: Why do you think Sprague closed its plants and pretty much moved away from the area? There's a lot of reasons that people come up with, but why, why do you think Sprague closed its plants?

T: I, I, I don't know whether Sprague was losing some of their orders, or what Stuart? I really don't know. Because see, I've been so away from it now. And see whereas Ann, you know, Ann that you met here [S: right, right], like she's still working. [S: Right] But she's in and out of

work. She doesn't work that steady anymore. Not that I know of. And so, because that's why she was able to come down that afternoon here because um, she wasn't working. [S: Umhm] So she was hoping to get called back. Yeah. Ann is an awfully good person. She's smart. She's as smart as a whip.

S: Umhm. I could tell that.

T: Yeah, and she really enjoyed her work down at the research center, because see she was in from the bottom up.

S: Right. She was really good at it.

T: Yeah. And uh, when I went in it had already been started. [S: Umhm] So that I was not in from the ground up. But as we went along we were making more progress on different types. It was really fascinating in that Research Center. [S: Oh I'm sure] Oh yes! It was fascinating. Yup. Yup.

S: And Ann was your supervisor?

T: Yeah, yeah. She was my supervisor.

S: What was she like as a supervisor?

T: Oh beautiful. Um, she's smart. Because as I said, she was ahead of all of this before the rest of us who had gone in. Yeah. yeah. And they, there was only just a couple of the fellows in there working in different departments. Yup. There was a lot of acid. A lot of these things you had to be very very careful with Stuart. Oh yeah!

S: Did you ever have any problems with acid spilling, or getting [unclear]?

T: No, no. Luckily I never had any problems with that. No. No.

S: But I guess if you weren't careful (--)

T: Well yeah, you had to be careful. Yeah. And then we, we had to keep the place awfully clean. We, Ann and I worked hard keeping that place up, keeping it cleaned. Yeah, because you never knew who they were going, uh, who the uh, upper people you know, such as bosses and like that, would want to bring a client in to see.

S: Uh huh, right.

T: And so the place was always immaculate. Yeah, we always had to make sure that we you know, ran our cleaner. And it was suppose to have been dust free. See, this was it. So this is why we always used to take our shower, our air shower before we even went in. Oh yeah, we, we put on our hoods and all. And uh, before we went in to the actual work part of it, no, we had to take our air shower. Yeah, yeah.

S: Just where like air, air would (--)

T: That's all. Yeah.

S: Go on you?

T: Right. And we, we would put our outfits on inside there. Yeah. Yeah, we had our white smocks and our white little hair things there. [Laughs] It was really interesting though. Ann was a love to work with. Yeah. Yeah. And she's really a, a good smart woman. Yeah.

S: So you really became friends with her [T: very friendly] while you were working with her.?

T: Very friendly. Yup. We had a lot of good conversations. And because, and we knew it wouldn't get any further. It was just between the two of us. Yeah. I became very friendly with her. She's an awfully good person. Yeah. Yeah. And then her husband worked in the same building. But then see, what happened there uh, in due time they had him go down to Worcester. So meanwhile they had adopted this little boy, because see Ann wasn't able to bare children. And they really wanted a family. So that's why they adopted this little boy. Oh he was a little baby. And so this is when she took time off from work. Yeah. And uh, I just felt bad when uh, I mean of course it's there business. But I, when you like people, and when you like certain people and then you see the marriage break up, I feel just as bad as I do for either the male or the female regardless. [S: Right] You know? And this is what was, and this happened. I don't know how many of the fellows Stuart. I know of at least three that um, they were over here in Research and Development and then before you knew it they opened up another Sprague Plant in Worcester. And I know of at least three people who's marriage broke up just because of that. And uh, no. See Amy and Ann had adopted uh, a little baby boy, because they always wanted children. And to make a long story short, after they had the little fellow they were happy as a lark! But then Amy wasn't coming home. He came home less and less. [S: Um] And that happened to a lot of others that been shifted from here down to Worcester. Because I had another good friend. And whenever I read of that divorce in the paper I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. And it's all because they weren't home enough with the family to make it a family. See this was the only thing. And then before you knew it, they were going out with some of the women in the area. So this is what broke up a lot of families. Oh yes!

S: So there were quite a few men who did go off to Worcester [unclear]?

T: They did. Yeah. yeah. yeah. I guess they thought the grass was greener. And I think they were making more money down in Worcester than they were here at the time. Yup. But uh, like I said, we were the crew that got all of this started. Sometimes you wonder where it's going to end. Yup.

S: Now there were mostly in the different departments, were, were there very many men and women who worked together? Or was it like women who did (--) Like let's say in the, when you first started working, like was it, like women would do mainly the paper rolling? You know, that

would be (--)

T: Oh that, that was on production. Yeah, that was on production.

S: Oh. Was that pretty much divided by sex?

T: Well the fellows, at one time they had a whole shift with fellows, because they uh, they needed more production. And so they uh, I think it was on a so called third shift that they had fellows doing that paper rolling. Yup. Because they came in varied sizes. [S: Umhm] From little bitsy things to great big things about that wide. [S: Umhm] And see the men would be more capable than women. Because you had to pull this mandril cover out in order to get the section out. [S: Oh!] See, once you rolled it, you had your uh, your chart there and once you rolled it up to the full point, that was it. You would just break it off there and then put your tape on and that would be it. [S: Um] But it all depended on what they wanted. And it had to be um, like even um, [sighs] if it was even a thicker paper it was even harder. You know, like say two ply, with one ply, whatever. And uh, this is where the trick was. Because you, sometimes they'd be so stiff when you pulled it off the mandril, well the whole bottom thing used to come right out of the opposite side. So you had to throw it away and start all over again. Yeah. Yeah, you had to be kind of careful. And see, each mandrel was for a certain thing. [S: Umhm] And uh, so that they were, I think they used to put them in to like these little uh, what do you call them? Like for the mail. Do you know what I mean St... uh, Ster... Sterling [laughs]. Stuart? Um, you know, these little cubby hole things there?

S: Yeah, right. Right.

T: Yeah. Yeah, or like the, the mail, the mail up on the trailing like that, just put the thing in, in the mailbox.

S: Mail slot.

T: Yeah. Uh dear! Yeah, it was, it was really something though. Just think back. Sometimes the more you think back the more you remember about these things. [S: Yes] It takes a little while, but once you start talking, oh they, they were all different sizes. Oh different size condensers.

S: It's hard to keep track of them all. [T: Oh yeah] All the different sizes. [T: Yeah, they were all (--)] And you have to make a certain number of each size.

T: Umhm. Umhm. Yeah. See like they used to get uh, like say they got an order in and uh, within that order was uh, how many they actually wanted as for stock, or as for uh, you know, a client. And um, so sometimes they used to go over and sometimes they were under. It all depended on how much stock you had there. And uh, because some of the orders were kind of big. Yeah. No, but I, I really, the best job I had was down there in Research. I'll always say it Stuart. I always enjoyed it. Even with the brown noses around, but I still enjoyed it. [Laughs] And I kept my nose clean. I, I don't want to get involved in any of that bologne. No. Time is too precious.

S: You were a technician there?

T: Yeah, yeah. Yup. Yeah, gradually I went up a little on the um, on the ladder. But um, then when I got laid I said, well I could care less. Yeah.

S: Was the pension enough for when you (--) Did you get a pension later?

T: I was laid off by that time.

S: Oh I see.

T: I never got my pension.

S: Yeah.

T: I had my pension credits that they sent me a check for. Yeah. And I would have gotten a darn good pension if I had, if I'd been able to hold a job. Oh yeah, yup. Yeah, because our wages were good. In Research and Development I can truthfully say the wages were good Stuart.

S: Do you remember how much you made?

T: No, off hand I don't. No. But it was a lot more than what I made on production, because see this was all hourly. [S: Umhm] Instead on production you had to go by your bonuses.

S: Right. So production you had like a basic rate that was [rest of comment unclear].

T: That's right. You had a basic rate and it was up to you if you went way over that rate and uh, so on and so forth. Well that was your uh, you were working for that rate, for the higher rate. Yeah. Instead down here we didn't have a rate, but we had to be a lot more careful too. And uh, so that's why to me it was (--)

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